DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 452 490 CS 014 298

AUTHOR Noble, Jo Anne
TITLE Chances. Classroom Connections.
INSTITUTION Reading Recovery Council of North America, Columbus, OH.
PUB DATE 2000-00-00
NOTE 7p.
AVAILABLE FROM Reading Recovery Council of North America, Inc., Suite 100, 1929 Kenny Road, Columbus, OH 43210-1069. Tel: 614-292-7111; Web site: http://www.readingrecovery.org.
PUB TYPE Journal Articles (080) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)
JOURNAL CIT Council Connections; v5 n2 p20-24 Win 2000
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Beginning Reading; Case Studies; *Literacy; Primary Education; *Reading Difficulties; *Reading Processes; *Teacher Role
IDENTIFIERS Clay (Marie); Directionality; Print Awareness; *Reading Behavior; *Reading Recovery Projects

ABSTRACT

To adult readers directional movement seems natural, because adults have mastered this aspect of the reading process, and it is quite automatic. For some children, directional behavior can be very complex. Such was the case for one bright little boy ("Chance") the author/educator served in Reading Recovery. This article tells the story of how noticing Chance's difficulties, and doing something about his confusions with directional movement in reading increased his "chances" to learn to read. Quoting Marie Clay's statement that learning about words and letters is "nonsense if you do not happen to be looking at the print in the appropriate direction" (Clay, 1993) and using it as a guide, the paper relates that the educator identified her job as that of helping Chance to organize his behavior in reading and attend to print in an orderly manner (following seven directional rules). It follows Chance's steady progress until his reading reaches the 50th percentile, and his report said: "No ability-achievement discrepancy scores were significant." The article includes a section on implications for classroom teachers. Contains an epilogue about Chance. (NKA)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 452 490

Chances.
Classroom Connections

Jo Anne Noble

Council Connections
v5 n2 Winter 2000

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

- This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
- Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

- Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

J. F. Bussell

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

CS 014 298

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Classroom Connections

Chances

Jo Anne Noble, Reading Recovery Teacher Leader, Charleston County School District, Charleston, SC

This column is designed to serve Reading Recovery partners: the classroom teachers who work together with Reading Recovery teachers to teach children to read and write.

A Simple Yet Complex Task

Dr. Marie Clay has brought attention to an important area of beginning reading instruction—the directional rules of print—that was often neglected in beginning reading programs. Before Clay developed awareness in teachers about viewing these prerequisites to reading as a priority, many teachers, myself included, began working with young readers focusing only on skills needed to read words correctly. Often, we ignored the need to teach children how to "look at print."

Clay (1991) cautions us to remember that a preschool child's everyday experience has taught him that a dog or a favorite toy can be recognized from any angle, upside-down, or back to front. This same principle does not apply to print recognition. Many letters change if they are inverted or flipped over (e.g., *p* becomes *q*, *d* becomes *p*, *b* becomes *d*, and *n* becomes *u*. Even *e* may look like *g* when written backward). Words are just as tricky. (Reverse the word *on*, and it becomes *no*; *saw* becomes *was*; *dog* becomes *god*.)

To adult readers directional movement seems natural, because we have mastered this aspect of the reading process, and it is quite automatic. For some children, directional behavior can be very complex. Such was the case for Chance, a bright little boy I served in Reading Recovery. This story tells how noticing Chance's difficulties, and doing something about his confusions with directional movement in reading increased his "chances" to learn to read.

At the beginning of the year, Chance's scores on *The Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement* (Clay, 1993a) were among the very lowest in the first grade. Because of the low implementation of Reading Recovery in this school, it was not possible for me to teach Chance in the first group of Reading Recovery children. When a student successfully completed the program in January, Chance was still struggling in his classroom, so he entered Reading Recovery. While I re-administered the six tests of the *Observation Survey* (Clay, 1993a), Chance approached the tasks eagerly. Despite his eagerness, when he did not know something he thought he should know, he looked to me with his big, brown eyes with a plea for help. When he saw the word *yes*, he turned to me, and with a confused look, said, "It looks like *you*." After substituting *see* for *find* several times in text reading, he again looked at me and said, "I looked at that word (*find*); I still don't know it."

Chance could write a few words and knew most of the letter sounds; his instructional reading level was preprimer two. In his six and a half years, Chance had many positive opportunities for learning literacy skills. Not only was he bright, but also he lived in an upper middle class home that was served by a school district that had the highest achievement test scores in the county. He had opportunities to travel and to participate in enriching activities. He had books at home and his parents read with him. A caring, dedicated first grade teacher complemented all of these benefits. Even with all these advantages, something was not coming together for Chance, and Reading Recovery became his last opportunity to learn to read before being retained in first grade.

My first lesson with Chance was on January 12. On the same day, Chance was tested and qualified for resource services in special education. His reading level was significantly lower than math and not commensurate with his intelligence. Chance scored at the sixty-ninth percentile on the Slossen Full-Range Intelligence Test. On the Woodcock Johnson, Chance scored at the fiftieth percentile in math, and at the twenty-fourth percentile in reading. Further testing by a school psychologist would follow. I asked myself, "Why would a boy of above average intelligence have such low reading ability? Did he have a learning disability that kept him from learning to read?" The biggest question on my mind was, "Will I be able to help?"

Practiced Peculiar Directional Habits

As I reviewed my test observations, I noticed Chance demonstrated letter and words reversals in all six sub-tests of the *Observation Survey*. On the letter identification task, he read the first two letters out of order, *F-A* instead of *A-F*. He named the lower case letter *q* incorrectly as *p*. He read words on a high frequency word list out of order.

On the Concepts of Print sub-test (Clay, 1993a), the child is shown a full page of text from the book *Stones* (Clay, 1979) that contains the words *was* and *saw*. The child taking the test is asked to point to the word *was*. When I asked Chance to locate the word *was* in the text, he said, "Was," sounded the /s/ then /w/. He said, "It sounds like *saw*," and pointed to *saw*. When asked to write words he knew, he wrote *go*, *it*, *no*, and *dog* from right to left. "Off" was written "Foo," in right to left order. He wrote "like" with the letters in this sequence "kiel."

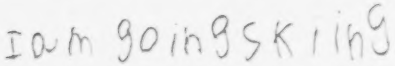
When asked to record letter sounds in a dictated sentence, he recorded the *v* in "have" first. Then, he moved left, and recorded the letter *a*. He reversed the upper case *D* in *dog*, the lowercase *a* in *am*, and the lower case *n* in *going*. On

continued on next page

Classroom Connections Chances Continued ----

text reading, he read, "Can you. . ." for "I can..."

On Chance's first day of instruction in the Reading Recovery program, Chance wrote about his family's weekend plans. He did not leave spaces between words:



I questioned whether Chance perceived the boundaries of words in his reading. When I asked him to listen for letter sounds in words, he could identify a letter for a sound in the word, but he could not distinguish if the sound came at the beginning or the end of the word. During our sixteenth lesson, Chance wrote *lood* for *pool*; the letters were upside down and in reverse order.

I noticed that Chance's eyes were not tracking print from left to right as he read, and he often looked to the right page first when he turned the pages of a book. Sometimes he completely missed the left page. These observations cautioned me that directional problems and spacing should be my first teaching priority with Chance.

Clay (1993) warns that children who practice peculiar directional habits for a long time need sensitive teaching. Chance had practiced his haphazard approach to direction through kindergarten and half of first grade--eighteen months. It should not be a surprise that he was experiencing difficulty in learning to read. Ehri (1994) describes these children as being in a logographic phase in which they "select and remember nonphonemic visual characteristics rather than letter-sound correspondences to read words"(p. 395). Once these children learn to perceive and recognize individual letters and words, they can begin to use letter-sound associations to read words.

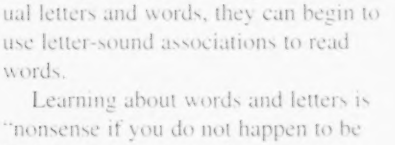
Learning about words and letters is "nonsense if you do not happen to be looking at the print in the appropriate direction" (Clay, 1993 b, p. 3). Using this statement as a guide, I identified my job as that of helping Chance to organize his behavior in reading and attend to print in an orderly manner following these directional rules:

1. Begin reading at the top/left hand corner of the page.
2. Move left to right across pages in the book.
3. Realize that print contains the message in reading.
4. Identify the difference between letters and words.
5. Recognize that words have a beginning and an ending part.
6. Attend to letters sequentially in a left to right direction.
7. Move left to right across words.

I needed to do this by enabling him to be successful at a difficult task. This would allow Chance to build confidence in himself, and would allow him to look at print in a way that he could process it to gain information. I realized that he might need to make gross observations of directional movement (left page before right) before he could make finer observations of directional movement (left to right across letters in words).

Building Confidence and Independence

My first step was to help Chance locate and perceive individual words. Spaces between words make sequential eye movements easier. They also make it easier to perceive letters at the front and back of individual words (Clay, p. 270). I asked Chance to use a chip to space between words in writing for a short time. Within a few lessons, I asked him to begin to judge spaces with his eyes alone. He was able to monitor spacing, but continued to use capital letters inappropriately, as in the following story:



To locate individual words while reading, I asked Chance to point to each word as he read. I occasionally asked "Are you right?" This required Chance to check the words, requiring him to monitor his own reading and to decide if he was matching the words he knew correctly. If he pointed to a word and called it see, but it was not spelled S-E-E, he began discovering that he made an error. If Chance was going to correct errors, he first needed to recognize errors. It is important that a reader knows when he is correct and when he is not (Clay, 1991) because this is the first step toward independent processing.

To assist Chance as he mastered directional rules, I used a green dot as a starting signal as suggested by Clay (1993, p. 20). I also placed a red dot for an ending signal at a distance on my table so he could put books he was reading or his writing notebook between the two dots. Chance knew the rules for "going" on green and "stopping" on red. We associated his background knowledge about the meaning of these colors and how the colors could help him remember where to start looking and where to stop looking at a letter, a word, pages in a book, etc.

Using the dots to help, I asked him to think about the formation of *b* and *d* in this way. He placed a magnetic letter for *b* between the two dots and noticed that the circle was on the red side. After doing the same with the letter *d*, we agreed that the circle was on the green side. When writing confusable words such as *dog* or *no*, I would have him stop and say the word while sliding his finger between the dots. Hearing the first sound while his finger was pointing to the green dot made it obvious to him that dog begins with *d*. Soon, he had worked out the confusions with *b* and *d*, *dog*, *no* and *on*, *was* and *saw* and was consistently writing from left to right.

Chance often relied on known words, his memory for the story pattern, and picture cues when reading books. He had not learned how to check on his attempts at reading unknown words. In an early lesson, he predicted *tiger* from looking at the picture on the page and asked, "Is that right?" I said the word slowly, sliding my finger from left to right between

continued on next page

Classroom Connections Chances Continued ----

the green and red dots on the table. Then I asked him to tell me what letter he heard at the beginning of the word. He was able to hear the *t*.

Congratulating him on his discovery, I explained that good readers check not only the picture, but with letters and sounds in the word. We practiced how this would be done on the word tiger. By using the initial letter on unknown words and the meaning of the story, Chance learned to make good predictions and check himself. In this lesson and the ones that followed, opportunities for Chance to practice this strategy were seized. He was encouraged to talk about how he saw me use the strategy and/or how he used it with my assistance through prompting. Together we carried out the advice of Lyons, Pinnell and Deford (1993) that suggests, "The child depends on what he or she is told and sees. Having a person to talk with while exploring the complex task of reading provides a support system, a temporary context, that assists in making the transition to literacy (p. 90)."

In the third session after the teaching with the word *tiger*, Chance independently corrected *throw* for *pitch*. When a child displays critical new learning, it is important for teachers to ask readers to verbalize the new thinking (Hindley, 1996). Therefore, I asked why he changed the word from *throw* to *pitch*. He was able to explain that *pitch* starts with a *p*, but when he said *throw*, he didn't hear a *p* sound. I praised his thinking and problem solving. It was a significant step in becoming a learner who monitors his thinking.

Enjoyable, meaningful stories provided rich opportunities to teach skills in a context that allowed Chance to use his language cues to make the learning of how to use print in reading easier. As Chance became more comfortable with differentiating beginning and ending parts of words, I drew his attention to endings by adding inflectional endings to his known words (i.e. *you're, door's,* and *looking*). This created an opportunity for Chance to learn another way of checking words.

By session 9, he read *house* for *home* and self-corrected. I asked, "How do you know?" Confidently, as if he had been doing it all along, he replied, "because of the *m*." He began to spontaneously tell me about his thinking strategies. While reading *Mrs. Wishy-Washy*, he got his mouth ready saying the sound for *b* in *duck*. Immediately, he self-corrected and turned to me saying, "It looks like a *goose*, but it's a *duck*." He seemed unaware that he had simultaneously fixed the *b* for *d*, and I didn't say anything. He did not need my praise. He had the greater reinforcement of knowing he had worked out his own problem and that he was right. Clay (1993b) tells us that asking a child to discuss a strategy used in problem-solving initially has generative value. But she also cautions, "It is a tactic that could be overworked and could interfere with the automatic responding that goes with fluency" (p. 43).

In early March, Chance was decoding simple consonant-vowel-consonant words (i.e. *bad, let, top*) quickly, and without prompting. Then one day, he came to the word *Grandma*, looked at me and said prophetically, "This is too hard to sound out." I agreed, wrote the word on a sentence strip, and cut the word apart *Gr—and—ma*. He read the word easily. Another milestone, Chance discovered that letter-by-letter sounding through words was not necessary. He could go "letter by chunk." We found other chunks for reading words, *ch* like in *Chance, out* in *outside* and *shouted, some* in *sometimes*. We used the same strategy with more difficult words such as *afternoon*.

Notice the progress Chance had made at this point. As he learned "how to look at print," he could begin to process the letter-sound associations in words. Ehri (1994) would say Chance moved from the logographic phase through the alphabetic phase. Thus, during the next stage in his development (i.e. the orthographic phase), he could begin to master the skill of making word analogies. As he looked from left to right through words he could use known words to decode parts of unknown words.

As his program continued, directional problems occasionally resurfaced, but Chance quickly worked them out. He seemed to enjoy using an exclamation mark at the end of all his sentences. One day, he wrote *i* for *!*, recognized his mistake, and said "That's *i*." He corrected his mistake without even looking at me. Nor do I think he was discussing his error for my benefit. He was merely talking to himself about his thinking process.

Despite the excellent progress that Chance was making, he continued to resist each new book. He would see the new book and moan, "It's hard." He knew there would be words he did not know and reading work to do in new books. In mid March, Chance made a hypothesis about the numbers he had seen on the upper right hand corner of my books. He asked if books with 11 were harder than books with 10. He had, on his own, discovered the system Reading Recovery teachers use to identify the difficulty level of books. After that, he considered it a challenge to move to the next level.

One day, he picked up his new book, level 13 and asked proudly, "Is this 31?" Even though he had reversed the numbers, I knew he had overcome his reluctance to read "hard books." Soon he began to tell me what kind of books he wanted to read. He asked for books about dirt bikes, Dr. Suess books, and books about space. He would find level 15 books on the shelf, and ask if he could take them home. He had become a reader.

On March 17, Saint Patrick's Day, Chance pulled the green tape off the desk, put it on his green hat and said he did not need it anymore. On that momentous day, the psychologist completed the resource testing.

Chance's reading was now at the fiftieth percentile. The report said, "No ability-achievement discrepancy scores were significant."

continued on next page

Classroom Connections Chances Continued ----

Implications for Classroom Teachers

Classroom teachers are aware of problems that occur when children do math computation in the wrong sequence. Errors in place value are obvious and teachers intervene quickly. Errors in looking at print are less obvious but are just as problematic.

Clay (1993a, p. 49-52) has developed a sub-test of her *Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement* to measure students mastery of Concepts About Print (CAP). This instrument tests the following print concepts:

1. Directional concepts
2. Hierarchical concepts
3. Book handling concepts
4. Specific concepts
5. Visual scanning

Upon entry to school, some children have control over directional movement in print and others learn it easily, but a few have considerable difficulty with this aspect of the reading process. To prevent directional problems in reading, teachers must watch closely for progress or problems in mastering these concepts of print. "Without appropriate directional behavior children's efforts to read become a scrambled heap of cues which are impossible to untangle" (Clay, 1991, p. 119).

To prevent the practicing of inappropriate directional movement, teachers must "learn to understand someone else's understanding" (Duckworth in Clay, 1998, p.87 and Cazden, 1988). This requires the teacher to move among children as they work on literacy tasks and to observe and to talk with children about their approach to those tasks. Slow rates of learning can occur when children do not get the kind of help needed. By observing children as they work and trying to understand what is happening and why, teachers can modify instruction in ways that are particularly important in formative stages of reading (Clay, 1993a). They are able to be more responsive to students and to provide more appropriate feedback.

Although this article dealt with one aspect of the reading process—concepts about print and specifically directional movement—I hope that classroom teachers will see the value of coaching children in mastering any skill that is part of the reading process. Clay (1993a) makes an analogy between teachers' observation and the coaching of a football team. She says the coach does not make the team better by looking at the final score; he watches closely as the team is playing and helps them to change their moves or strategies. These changes affect the final score.

Current classroom "best" practice suggests that teachers provide focused skill mini-lessons during guided reading or interactive writing sessions for small groups of children. This format allows classroom teachers to explicitly teach and closely observe individual children's responses to their teaching. The children who are struggling in beginning reading need a coach to show them the right moves and strategies that will allow them to improve their "chances to score" as proficient readers.

References

Clay, M. M. (1991). *Becoming literate: The construction of inner control.* Portsmouth: Heinemann.

Clay, M. M. (1993a). *An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement.* Portsmouth: Heinemann.

Clay, M. M. (1993b). *Reading Recovery: A guidebook for teachers in training.* Portsmouth: Heinemann.

Clay, M. M. (1998). *By different paths to common outcomes.* York, ME: Stenhouse Publishers, p. 87.

Cazden, C. (1988). *Classroom discourse: The language of teaching and learning.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann

Ehri, L.C. (1994). Development of the ability to read words: Update. In: Ruddell, R. B., et. al. *Theoretical models and processes of reading.* Newark, DE: International Reading Association, p. 325.

Hindley, J. (1996). *In the company of children.* York, Maine: Stenhouse Publishers.

Lyons, C., G. Pinnell, D. DeFord. (1993). *Partners in learning: Teachers and children in Reading Recovery.* New York, NY: Teacher's College Press.

Children's Books Referenced:

Clay, M. M. (1979). *Stones.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Cowley, J. (1980). *Mrs. Wishy-Washy.* Bothell, WA: The Wright Group.

Epilogue: What Happened to Chance?

Joe Yukish, Editor: Classroom Connections Column

As I sat in my office editing this article in order to send it on to Janet Bufalino, Editor of RRCNA's *Council Connections*, I asked Ruby Brown, Reading Recovery Teacher Leader Specialist at the Clemson University Reading Recovery Training Center, if she wanted to hear a wonderful Reading Recovery success story. As I told her about Joanne and Chance, she said, "Oh, that child. His mother was going to speak at our Reading Recovery Banquet in October, but a conflict prevented her from attending." Ruby shared the following letter his parents sent to be read at the banquet. It will answer the question in the mind of any reader who is asking, "Did Chance make it?" His father who is an attorney writes:

continued on next page

Classroom Connections Chances Continued ----

Dear Dr. Brown,

Thank you for contacting us about preserving the Reading Recovery Program. This is a letter of support for the Reading Recovery Program and is to be used by you in seeking its preservation and expansion.

Our son, Chance, is now a second grade student here in Charleston County. Last year, in first grade, he experienced significant difficulty with reading. Chance had this problem despite the fact that his mother and I spent a good bit of time reading to him, working with him, and had involved him in kindergarten programs in an effort to prepare him for first grade. Though my wife and I were very concerned about Chance's inability to keep up with his class, we were doubly concerned about the evident frustration Chance experienced because he realized he was way behind his classmates. We believe that Chance was just about to "shut down" when, through my wife's persistence, we were able to get Chance in the Reading Recovery Program.

Chance was able to work with Mrs. Noble at Belle Hall Elementary School in Mt. Pleasant and the impact was very rewarding. Mrs. Noble evaluated Chance's condition, developed procedures to overcome those weaknesses, and I am happy to report that Chance is now a competent and improving second grade reader. As parents, we are especially pleased with the effect this has had on our son, as he is now a proud and eager reader rather than a frustrated one.

At the time Chance received the Reading Recovery intervention, he was very much in danger of having to repeat his first grade year. Apparently, we were lucky to get Chance into Reading Recovery at all because there weren't enough funds to handle the students who needed the assistance. I am grateful to my wife for her persistence, but I am concerned about the other students who could not take advantage of this program because funds were not available or their parents were unaware of it.

We are truly grateful for the Reading Recovery Program and are pleased to see our tax dollars at work in this manner. It made a very significant and positive change in our little student. While we realize there is a cost to the Reading Recovery Program, we believe it is offset by the fact that Chance is now a good contributor to the progress of his class. In addition, the State of South Carolina does not have to undertake the cost of having our son resubmit to the first grade. We've seen Reading Recovery work and it is worthwhile.